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ABSTRACT

In 1949 the newly-inaugurated president of Northern Illinois University (NIU), Dr. Leslie Holmes, announced his intention to establish a program in outdoor teacher education. The program would provide opportunities for teaching and experiential learning in a naturalistic setting. Two years later, NIU acquired a 66-acre camp near Oregon, Illinois, a former art colony, created by sculptor Lorado Taft, that had fallen into disuse following the artist's death. From modest beginnings, Taft Field Campus developed a six-pronged educational program that has made northern Illinois a focal point of outdoor education in the United States. Faculty members have been active in promoting the philosophy and practice of outdoor education and outdoor teacher education. Many conferences, seminars, and workshops have been held at Taft Campus. Over 96,000 schoolchildren and 45,000 NIU undergraduates have participated in resident outdoor education programs. Over 900 graduate students have received master's degrees in outdoor teacher education. The Taft Instructional Materials Center houses over 1,000 dissertations and theses on outdoor education and related topics. This anniversary booklet contains photographs, poems, a brief timetable of Taft Campus historical events and noteworthy faculty, and selected paragraphs about outdoor education and Taft Campus excerpted from NIU publications. (SV)

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